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14 December 1973

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MEMORANDUM FOR: NIO/SEA

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FROM : Chief, S/LM

SUBJECT : Reported Communist Coastal Shipments
into Southern South Vietnam

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1.

[redacted] South Vietnam's National Police seized four ocean-going vessels and 14 members of a Communist transportation group which reportedly has been operating a sea resupply system for Communist troops in the Delta. [redacted]

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[redacted] since the January ceasefire agreement the Communists have made regular coastal deliveries of arms and munitions picked up from North Vietnamese supply vessels off the northern coast of Quang Tri Province in northern South Vietnam. The ships used in transferring the supplies southward each had a capacity of about 100 tons, a length of 25 meters, a beam of 5 meters, and all were legally registered in South Vietnam. In addition to the four already captured, police are searching for 7 other ships -- all owned by the same individual -- which may have been used in supply runs. [redacted]

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2. This evidence indicates a strong possibility that the Communists have been able to infiltrate a substantial amount of supplies into South Vietnam's Delta by sea over the past year. Although no confirmed successes have been reported recently, the high volume of fishing traffic and the control by the Communists of numerous enclaves along the coastline of MR-4 make detection of off loading activities extremely difficult.

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3. Historically, MR-4 has been the primary target for Communist sea infiltration attempts. Following the initiation of the Market Time sea interdiction program in February 1965, however, these attempts were largely unsuccessful. Most missions were conducted by North Vietnamese 100-ton trawlers, which sailed southward at a considerable distance from the South Vietnamese shore. This made detections by air and sea patrols relatively easy. Between August 1969 and August 1971 a total of 20 attempts were detected, of which 16 aborted, two were destroyed, and two were successful.

4. Despite their limited success over past years, the Communists have continued their program with no letup in intensity, and there is no reason to believe that they have abandoned their efforts since the ceasefire. The Communists' overland transport system into MR-4 remains by a considerable extent their least developed in South Vietnam, and one that is vulnerable to ARVN interdiction. Moreover, Communist resupply requirements in the Delta are small, and the relatively large amount of equipment that can be delivered by one successful coastal mission make this method extremely attractive. Finally, the Market Time surveillance has recently been handed over to the South Vietnamese, who probably are not as efficient as the U.S. Navy.

25X1 5. The information on recent coastal deliveries to MR-4 [redacted] is generally consistent with other evidence received during the ceasefire period. For example, [redacted]

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25X1 [redacted] Vinh Binh Province (contiguous to Ba Xuyen) recently stated that he believes Communist units there are being resupplied with weapons and ammunition by sea. He has received reports that the supplies originally come from China, and are delivered to coastal MR-4 by fishing vessels which obtain the cargo from larger ships at sea.

6. In addition, there were several indications that the Communists intended to step up sea deliveries to South Vietnam following the ceasefire agreement. This desire was manifested in the attempt to capture Sa Huynh in southern MR-1 during February. Also, the Communists' control of the Cua Viet area in northern Quang Tri and the high level of shipping activity observed there support the possibility that North Vietnamese vessels may be off loading supplies to ships involved in clandestine operations in the south. Finally, other instances

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of Communist use of ships bearing GVN legal registration numbers to deliver supplies to MR-4 have been noted, although these ships were considerably smaller than the 100-tons vessels recently captured. This use of GVN registration numbers would allow the ships to use corridors close to shore and mix with fishing traffic, thus increasing the Communists' chances of eluding Market Time.

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